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Stimulus cash pushes local highway work

U.S. 20 paving may happen one year early

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A handful of area highway and bridge projects has been put on the fast track to completion as Iowa transportation planners get ready for an influx of federal stimulus money.

The biggest of those projects, which may start this summer, is a \$3 million paving job on an existing four-lane section U.S. Highway 20 in Webster County. Thanks to the stimulus money, it may begin a year earlier than expected.

"Technically, this \$3 million project is not funded by federal economic stimulus," said state Sen. Daryl Beall, D-Fort Dodge. "Those funds will be used for other shovel-ready projects, freeing up dollars so this 2010 project can be completed in 2009. I'm pleased the Department of Transportation has moved up this project a year."

The Iowa Department of Transportation has announced that these projects have been moved forward on the Five-Year Plan for Highway Improvements:

- Paving the shoulders of U.S. Highway 20 between Webster County Road P59 and the border of Webster and Hamilton counties
- Replacing a bridge on U.S. Highway 69 in Jewell in Hamilton County at a cost of \$633,000
- Repairing pavement on U.S. Highway 18 west of U.S. Highway 169 near Algona in Kossuth County at a cost of \$275,000
- Repairing pavement on U.S. Highway 169 from a point one-half mile south of Humboldt to Iowa Highway 3 at a cost of \$250,000

All of those projects have been moved into the current fiscal year. The bridge job in Jewell was originally set for next year. The projects in Algona and Humboldt were scheduled for 2013.

Another 50 projects across the state are also being moved up on the five-year plan.

"A number of these projects had previously been scheduled up to five years out and are now being moved to the front of the line and other projects that were unscheduled will be added into the out years

as a result," state Rep. McKinley Bailey, D-Webster City, said.

Contracts for the work have not been awarded yet.

"We need to fix that 169," said state Rep. Dolores Mertz, D-Ottosen. "It's a dangerous road. I'm pushing to get 169 done all the way to Highway 18 in Algona."

A larger project to improve U.S. Highway 169 between Fort Dodge and Humboldt is set to start in the summer of 2010.

Iowa is slated to receive \$238.2 million for highways from the federal stimulus law, which is called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Transportation officials said the four area projects being moved up on the schedule won't necessarily be paid for with federal stimulus money. However, that extra money coming into the state's road accounts made it possible to start that work earlier than planned, the Department of Transportation reported.

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